



BOARD MEETING NOTEBOOK

Grants Committee Report

**September 21-23, 2023
Polson, MT**

**Humanities Montana
Grantmaking Report
September 2023**

This report summarizes work completed during the third quarter of FY2023 as it relates to the current strategic plan.

Strategic Priorities for Re-energizing Grantmaking

Process Strategy 1: Evaluate grantmaking categories and evaluate processes (internal)

Over the past year, we have taken several steps to begin the process of evaluating HM’s grantmaking. The approach is multifaceted and we are evaluating and implementing changes in stages. This tiered system of evaluation will enable HM to make data-driven decisions about revisions to our grantmaking strategies and processes.

In July, staff administered a survey and focus group with past applicants to learn more about their experience with our application process, collect general feedback about HM’s grantmaking, and gather insights and suggestions about beneficial changes to our offerings and processes.

The survey and focus group collected responses from 35 past applicants who applied for funding sometime between 2021 and 2023, with the majority applying in 2022. Approximately 50% of respondents applied for opportunity grants and the other 50% for regular grants.

When asked to identify the “types” of grants that would best support their humanities-focused work/programming, we learned the following:

- 48% would like to see Humanities Montana offer mini-grants for requests up to \$2,000
- 48% would like to see Humanities Montana offer regular “project” grants in excess of \$2,000
- 41% were interested in project grants focused on building innovative programming vs. 35% seeking funds for program expansion
- 31% would like to see Humanities Montana offer a multi-media grant category
- 31% would like Humanities Montana to continue the film + video grant opportunities
- 10% were interested in either a research or public humanities fellowship

Additionally, individuals were asked to share how they thought Humanities Montana could improve existing application cycles/deadlines (April 20, August 20, and December 20). Overall, participants appreciated having multiple opportunities to request funding throughout the year and provided the following suggestions:

- “Perhaps add one more to match annual, quarterly work cycles.”
- “Move April to March.”
- “December is a tough time due to year-end activities.”
- “More dates for flexibility and surprise opportunities.”
- “Fewer, or just one date would allow the projects to be compared on equal footing. We applied during a more competitive cycle and received only partial funding.”

Staff also assessed grant deadlines and time needed to review applications and make award decisions. Through conversations with other grantmaking organizations, staff concluded that a standard timeframe between application deadlines and award decisions is approximately 8 weeks. Humanities Montana has seen a decrease in the amount of time allocated to reviewing applications over the past few years which has impacted both staff and board capacity to evaluate applications.

Past applicants were also asked to provide detailed feedback about our application and reporting forms. The feedback has been very helpful as staff works to revise the application and reporting forms in Foundant. Moving forward Humanities Montana will offer an optional LOI form and establish office hours for Zoom consults with staff in addition to existing processes (emails, phone calls, scheduled Zoom meetings, in-person meetings, and informational webinars). This will enable Humanities Montana to transition preliminary questions and data collection from the application form to an LOI format.

Process Strategy 2: Enhance outreach, impact, and assessment (external)

Humanities Montana continues to identify new opportunities to reach priority communities across the state and build strategic and collaborative partnerships with other organizations to expand outreach. In June, Humanities Montana staff attended MSU Extension's *reImaging Rural Gathering* in Townsend. The conference welcomed businesses, organizations, and community leaders from some of Montana's most rural communities to learn about rural communities' needs, innovative community projects, and discuss solutions to ongoing challenges.

Repeatedly, constituents expressed a need for smaller amounts of more accessible funding (informal applications and without match requirements). The rationale is that many rural organizations have extremely limited capacity to 1) find funding, 2) write professional grant applications, 3) source matching funds, and 4) complete complicated follow-up reports to funders. This feedback aligns with our findings earlier this year that Humanities Montana receives a higher volume of lower amounts of funding through opportunity grants and Big Sky Reads from rural communities compared to larger population centers.

The staff has also seen this reflected in outreach to rural communities while planning grant writing workshops in White Sulphur Springs, Glendive, and Pablo. The workshops, facilitated in partnership with *The Foundation for Montana History*, have all had waiting lists for participation. MSU Extension expressed in an email "This is SO great! Just what people [in rural communities] need."

Immediate Actions

In response to some of these findings and in addition to learning from the past 12 months, Humanities Montana plans to implement the following adjustments to grantmaking operations:

- 1) Transition opportunity grants to Mini-Grants and increase funding request limit to \$2,000. Retain simplified application, evaluation, and award decision processes. No cost match is required.
- 2) Rename regular grants, Regular Project Grants and increase funding request amount to "in excess of \$2,000"
- 3) Pause the research fellowship grant opportunity in December 2023, evaluate, and re-open with revisions during a later cycle in FY24

- 4) Shift application deadlines to increase time for staff and board member review and encourage more applications during the December cycle. New dates: December 1, April 1, August 1

Considerations/Recommendations

- 1) Create a multi-media project grant category
- 2) Transition film + video *and* add a multi-media project grant to the April grant cycle
- 3) Offer opportunity grants as “special” funding opportunities when funding is available (returned funds, unspent funds, unrestricted funds from private donors, etc.)
- 4) Revise and update research fellowship grants to encourage more and higher quality applications with greater outputs and benefits to Humanities Montana.

Next Steps

- Revise guidelines, application forms, and reporting forms for all FY24 grant opportunities
- Update outreach resources to reflect all revisions and updates to grantmaking processes
- Develop formal Request for Proposal (RFP) resources and post to grant search websites (Grantstation, Guidestar, Grants.gov, Foundation Center, etc.)
- General year-end activities

Additional Comments

Detailed information regarding the recent application review process (staff and board comments and scores) are available for review in the board portal.

Grants Manager slide presentation will be available for review in the board portal after the board meeting.

Humanities Montana Grants Committee Meeting

September 12, 2023

Zoom, 11:00 AM

Present: Jennifer Corning (chair), Carla Homstad, Jeremy Carl, Ray Ekness, Lathie Poole, Jill Baker (executive director), and Megan Sundry (grants manager).

Committee member Francine Spang-Willis resigned from the board on Thursday, September 7th and therefore was not in attendance.

A quorum was present.

Committee Chair Jennifer Corning called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m., welcomed the committee, and thanked everyone for reviewing proposals. Jennifer noted that all 21 proposals were reviewed by 5 to 8 board members and that the committee will discuss proposals with weighted scores 80% and above.

Ray Ekness recused himself from reviewing, scoring, commenting, and voting on the following projects:

- The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana
- 'The Write Question' a Montana Public Radio program and podcast
- Montana Media Lab's Threatened podcast

Jeremy Carl noted that he only had time to review a few of the film + video proposals. Therefore, he abstained from voting on: The Story of Us, Unearthed, USS Montana, Connecting the Grizzly, and "Why Should I Care?".

Grants Committee Discussion

Grants Manager Megan Sundry provided a brief overview of the YTD grantmaking budget and funds available for award decisions through October 31, 2023. Committee Chair Jennifer Corning facilitated discussions of grant applications by type (film + video requests, regular request) and then by overall rating and funding availability.

Total number of applications reviewed by board members = 21

Sum of funds requested from all applications = \$161,076

Estimated remaining funds in HM's FY23 grantmaking budget available = \$70,705

The committee considered the following film + video grant applications:

Film + Video grant applications (10 received, \$89,500 requested)

- The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana, The Extreme History Project
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 93.8%* - 3 in favor, 2 abstentions
- Stars & Stories: Northern Cheyenne, the Morning Star People, Montana State University Billings
\$5,500 - *Weighted Score: 92.5%* - 5 in favor
- USS Montana Documentary project, USS Montana Committee, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 88.3%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention
- Unearthed: Native Peoples' Ancient Lives Revealed in the Greater Yellowstone, Documentary Educational Resources
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 87.2%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention

- Connecting the Grizzly, International League of Conservation Photographers
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 80.6%* - 3 in favor, 1 dissenter, 1 abstention
- Clara Boone, MINT Film MT
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 78.2%* - *Not discussed*
- Documentary Film “Why Should I Care?” The Homeless in Helena, Hands On Global, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 70.6%* - *Not discussed*
- Taking the Reins, Center for Independent Documentary, Inc.
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 65.2%* - *Not discussed*
- Climate Aid: Voices of the Forest, The Montana Project
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 59.9%* - *Not discussed*
- “Mother Range: Rearing Hope in America’s Livestock Industry,” AERO
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 59.9%* - *Not discussed*

Jeremy Carl raised concerns about the future implications of the recent Supreme Court ruling on Affirmative Action rules and regulations for Humanities Montana’s grantmaking. Executive Director Jill Baker shared that this issue has been raised with NEH and in collaboration with the Federation of State Humanities Council and executive directors from state councils across the country, risk management strategies will be identified. Additionally, Carla Homstad stated that priority communities were approved by the board in the most recent strategic planning process and requested this conversation be continued during the board of director’s next strategic planning session.

The committee shifted the conversation to consider the following regular grant applications:

Regular grant applications (*11 received, \$71,576 requested*)

- Rocky Mountain Kid Lit Festival, Billings Public Library
\$3,500 - *Weighted Score: 97.2%* - 5 in favor
- Montana Media Lab’s Threatened Podcast, University of Montana
\$11,000 - *Weighted Score: 91.2%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention
- Native Filmmaker Initiative (NFI) Film Club, Big Sky Film Institute
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 90.7%* - 5 in favor
- New Songs for the Butte Mining Camp Essay Book, The Clark Chateau
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 90.5%* - 5 in favor
- ‘The Write Question’ a Montana Public Radio program and podcast, University of Montana
\$9,999 - *Weighted Score: 90.4%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention
- Indigenous Heritage Celebration: Language & Art, C.M. Russell Museum
\$4,383 - *Weighted Score: 88.7%* - 5 in favor
- Life in the Land, The Common Ground Project
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 87.2%* - 2 in favor, 3 dissenters

- Norman Maclean Festival presents 'Finding our Place in Nature: The Power of Story', Alpine Artisans, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 86.4%* - 3 in favor, 2 dissenters
- 3rd Annual Winter Lodge Rendezvous, Montana Playwrights Network
\$2,275 - *Weighted Score: 86.1%* - *Suggestion to reconsider for a \$2,000 mini-grant in November 2023*
- 5 in favor
- Expert Lecture Series and Publication for WITHIN: Louis Still-Smoking and Josh Isaiah, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
\$5,419 - *Weighted Score: 85.9%* - 1 in favor, 4 dissenters
- The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Series, University of Montana
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 77.1%* - *Not discussed*

After initial discussions of each application, the committee assessed award amounts for each project in relation to the amount requested, available funding, and organizational priorities. The committee also aligned the funding amounts for repeat projects based on the regranting guidelines which states that funding request be at equal or lesser amounts than the previous award.

As the committee considered partial funding for projects, Jill Baker and Megan Sundy encouraged committee members to consider the project scope and overall project budget when determining partial funding amounts. Partially funded projects require staff and applicants to revise project budgets and, in some cases, make significant changes to the project activities and timelines. Jill and Megan reviewed budgets for projects being considered for partial funding and provided feedback to the committee as needed to determine award amounts for this funding cycle.

Based on this discussion, the committee recommends the following award decisions to the full board...

FULL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana, The Extreme History Project
- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,500, Stars & Stories: Northern Cheyenne, the Morning Star People, Montana State University Billings
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, USS Montana Documentary project, USS Montana Committee, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Connecting the Grizzly, International League of Conservation Photographers
- REGULAR - \$5,000, New Songs for the Butte Mining Camp Essay Book, The Clark Chateau
- REGULAR - \$4,383, Indigenous Heritage Celebration: Language & Art, C.M. Russell Museum

PARTIAL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,000, Unearthed: Native Peoples' Ancient Lives Revealed in the Greater Yellowstone, Documentary Educational Resources
- REGULAR - \$3,000, Rocky Mountain Kid Lit Festival, Billings Public Library
- REGULAR - \$5,000, Montana Media Lab's Threatened Podcast, University of Montana
- REGULAR - \$4,000, Native Filmmaker Initiative (NFI) Film Club, Big Sky Film Institute
- REGULAR - \$4,000, 'The Write Question' a Montana Public Radio program and podcast, University of Montana

- REGULAR - \$5,000, Norman Maclean Festival presents 'Finding our Place in Nature: The Power of Story', Alpine Artisans, Inc.

DECLINE FUNDING (9 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Clara Boone, MINT Film MT
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, "Mother Range: Rearing Hope in America's Livestock Industry," AERO
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Documentary Film "Why Should I Care?" The Homeless in Helena, Hands On Global, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Taking the Reins, Center for Independent Documentary, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Climate Aid: Voices of the Forest, The Montana Project
- REGULAR - \$10,000, Life in the Land, The Common Ground Project
- REGULAR - \$2,275, 3rd Annual Winter Lodge Rendezvous, Montana Playwrights Network
- REGULAR - \$5,419, Expert Lecture Series and Publication for WITHIN: Louis Still-Smoking and Josh Isaiah, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
- REGULAR - \$5,000, The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Series, University of Montana

Staff will consult with The Montana Playwrights Network and ask them to consider reapplying for a mini-grant in November 2023.

Jennifer Corning asked the committee for final thoughts and comments before voting on award recommendations to be presented at the September board meeting in Polson.

The committee voted unanimously in favor of presenting the award recommendations to the full board next week.

TOTAL RECOMMENDED AWARD: \$70,883.00

Carla Homstad suggested the committee consider options for moving Film + Video applications into a separate grant cycle in the future. Grants Manager Megan Sundy presented the April cycle as the most viable option and noted that it would take significant planning to facilitate this transition.

The meeting adjourned at 12:37 PM. MJHS

Humanities Montana
FY23 Opportunity Grants Awarded
November 2022 – September 2023

Opportunity grants provide quick-response funding of up to \$1,000 for eligible cultural institutions across Montana. Since November 2022, Humanities Montana awarded 18 opportunity grants totaling \$17,114 to 18 different organizations across the state.

Award Summaries

Blaine County Museum Speaker Series, Winter 2023, Blaine County Museum, Chinook, MT, \$1,000. Blaine County Museum invited Austin Haney, Blaine County historian, and Anthony Wood, author of 2022 Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize finalist “Black Montana,” to Chinook to give lectures on Thursday, January 19th and Thursday, February 9th respectively.

No More Violence Week: Parent Nation Community Collaboration, Great Falls Public Library, Great Falls, MT, \$1,000. As part of No More Violence Week, the Parent Nation Community Collaboration project will support community book club discussions of Parent Nation by Dana Suskind. Participants read and engaged in meaningful conversations and reflections with others.

Year of Learning: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Lincoln County Public Libraries, Libby, MT, \$1,000. The Year of Learning offered as a 6-session series and hosted by the Lincoln County Public Library in Libby, MT, discussed various topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion as they relate to library professionals across Montana. Every other month will highlight a new focus area, with opportunities for Montana library professionals to learn, interact, and take action. Attendees will asynchronously explore selected resources and then join in live online discussions of the material.

Montana Shakespeare in the Parks and the Lewistown Art Center present: 50 Years of Costumes, Lewistown Art Center, Lewistown, MT, \$1,000. “50 Years of Costumes” is a research project and exhibition showcasing the diversity, craftsmanship, and creativity of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks costuming. Produced in collaboration between the LAC and MSIP, this project features the scholarly research of Denise R. Massman, MFA. This traveling exhibition will include up to 30 costumes from the rich, 50-year history of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks along with 10 didactic panels featuring information and Denise Massman’s insights on both the costuming and history of Shakespeare and performance in Montana. The exhibition will premiere at the Lewistown Art Center during the month of April, 2023.

Terry, Montana Civics Class Educational Legislative Experience, Terry School District, Terry, MT, \$989.12. The Terry, MT high school civics class traveled to Helena in March to observe and experience the 2023 legislative session. Students learned about the history of Helena, met their Montana House Representatives and Senators, and witnessed processes involved in creating and approving legislation.

High Plains Book Awards author panel discussions Oct 7, 2023, High Plains Book Awards, Billings, MT, \$1,000. As part of the High Plains Book Festival, High Plains Book Awards will host panel discussions influenced by the books and finalist authors who attend the festival in October. Potential panel topics include Indigenous writers, women writers, youth writers, etc. The panel discussions will expose these groups’ issues and elevate their voices. High Plains Book Awards communicates with over 200

community readers who rank the nominations which typically number almost 300. Each book is read by four different people. The Award Ceremony is also open to the public. All events are free to the public.

NBF Presents Novels that Connect Us, Elk River Arts & Lectures, Livingston, MT, \$1,000. This free public event, organized in collaboration with one of the nation's most prestigious literary organizations, invited the nation's most talented writers to talk about their work in ways that draw our community closer together. The event will take place in downtown Livingston on Wednesday, May 3rd. National Book Award–honored authors Tess Gunty (*The Rabbit Hutch*, 2022 Fiction Winner) and Tommy Orange (*There There*, 2018 Fiction Longlist) follow a large cast of characters in their novels—all affected in different ways by class, gender, and their environment. These two authors talked about how interwoven storytelling builds toward a more connected, collective future in a discussion moderated by community member Shane Doyle, a Bozeman-based Apsáalooke educator, and writer.

Food for Thought 2023: An Evening of Great Conversation, Billings Public Library Foundation, Billings, MT, \$1,000. This popular event, in its seventeenth year, is a gathering of community to share thoughts, ask questions, and to learn more thoroughly. Discussion topics have been selected from a wide variety of subjects, from arts and literature as well as food, public policy and popular aspects of the Montana scene. Some examples of this year's Conversation Hosts are: Provost Pardis Mahdavi who will be discussing her Iranian heritage and the morality laws currently affecting Iran, Nobel Prize Winner Dr. Steve Running to talk about water ecosystems, and Jennifer Smith to discuss Indian Education for All.

A Post-Film Discussion at the 2023 International Wildlife Film Festival (IWFF) with David Quammen + Betsy Gaines Quammen, The Roxy Theater, Missoula, MT, \$1,000. Each spring, the International Wildlife Film Festival (IWFF) hosts many festival guests who take part in Q&A sessions during the festival. One 2023 highlight was the screening & post-film discussion for *RANGE RIDER*. Special guests, David Quammen and Betsy Gaines Quammen, and moderator, Chris Johns, guided a 35-minute conversation about wolf conflict, western expansion, encroaching urbanization in the West, impacts on wildlife, and other current issues in the West today.

Mullan Road Conference 2023, Friends of Two Rivers Inc., Milltown, Montana, \$1,000. The 2023 Mullan Road Conference was held June 9-11 at Fort Missoula. The annual conference is an assembly of historians, scholars and fans of stories surrounding the military wagon road built by Lt. John Mullan from Walla Walla to Fort Benton in 1859-62. A goal of the 2023 conference is to examine the ramifications of Mullan's military wagon road in the decades just before and after construction. These were crucial times for native tribes along the route as they dealt with the effects of floods of Euro Americans into their homelands, and voices of people representing the Salish tribes from the Flathead Reservation were heard during the conference. One of the stops on the Sunday bus tour included Council Grove State Park west of Missoula, where the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 was signed between Gov. Isaac Stevens and the Bitterroot Salish, Lower Kutenai and Upper Pend d'Oreille (Kalispell) tribes.

Kids History Day 2023, Big Horn County Historical Museum, Hardin, MT, \$700. The Big Horn County Museum Kids History Day is an event created by the museum to encourage young minds from around the county as well as the surrounding area to learn about the rich history of Big Horn County and its homesteader past. Kids History Day is a fun and interactive experience for students to learn about the local and state history of where they grew up and live it for themselves. With over 15 stations of interactive activities, music, and food, students can really get a feel for what life was like on the plains of Montana during the homesteader days.

Crow Language for Native American Unit in Suitcases for Schools Programming, [The Billings Preservation Society / Moss Mansion](#), Billings, MT, \$1,000. This project will enable the Billings Preservation Society to include a Native American unit in their educational traveling suitcase program for urban and rural schools. Crow tribal member and drum maker Oly Hugs has been assisting with a Native American Artifact Exhibit and restoration of the Crow Warrior Shirt, including language and culture interpretation which they will adapt and incorporate into educational programming at the Moss Mansion, tour scripts, summer camps, and online material. Material created in this project will include worksheets, audio recordings, musical instruments, and lesson ideas for teachers to use in their classrooms. Classroom lessons can include writing, spelling, discussion, art, and music. Teachers will check out, pick up, and return suitcases at the Moss Mansion or access material online.

North Valley Music School Spring and Summer Music Workshops 2023, [North Valley Music School](#), Whitefish, MT, \$730. North Valley Music School's 2023 Spring and Summer Music Workshops are free community events featuring educational lectures and discussions led by a Montanan musician titled, "Your Brain on Music." The program explores music education from an academic and biological perspective as part of a Community Workshop.

Missoula Writing Collaborative – Ledger Art Poetry Project Anthologies, [Missoula Writing Collaborative](#), Missoula, MT, \$1,000. Following a ledger art poetry project in five elementary schools on the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Reservation in February with Salish storyteller Aspen Decker, the Missoula Writing Collaborative printed anthologies with student ledger art and poems. Anthologies were distributed to students at schools and at a public student poetry reading on May 30, 2023, at Salish Kootenai College.

Heirlooms Writing Workshops, [Missoula Public Library](#), Missoula, MT, \$400. Molly Barari of Heirlooms Creative Life Writing will present two workshops at Missoula Public Library during Family History Month (October) 2023. The first session is "Heirlooms Family History Writing Workshop," and the second session is "Heirlooms Creative Life Story Writing Workshop."

The Catch of a Lifetime: Fly-fishing Literature with author John MacLean, [Bozeman Public Library](#), Bozeman, MT, \$1,000. Author John MacLean has penned a major new Foreword to the Centennial anniversary edition of *Big Two-Hearted River* by Ernest Hemingway. Mr. MacLean is interested in discussing how this short story affected his life and inspired his love of fly fishing. Bozeman Public Library will host a reading, presentation, and discussion with Mr. MacLean on Friday, September 29 about Ernest Hemingway's *Big Two-Hearted River* along with some of his own work.

Virginia City Players Research & Oral History Project, [Montana State University Library](#), Bozeman, MT, \$1,000. In honor of the 75th anniversary of the Virginia City Players in Virginia City, MT, this grant will research and capture the previously undocumented history of the longest-running summer theater West of the Mississippi. This company has been supported and thrived in a small community of just 223. This project will collect oral histories and photographs from long-time players to patrons, compiling a cohesive history of the company.

Jesse Albrecht Exhibition/Artist Talk, [Schoolhouse History & Art Center \(SHAC\)](#), Colstrip, MT, \$1,000. In November 2023, the Schoolhouse Art and History Center (SHAC) in Colstrip, MT will host a lecture and discussion with artist, Jesse Albrecht, to critically interpret his artwork and explore heavy themes of loss, cross-cultural experiences, war, travel, and religion. As a veteran of the Iraq war, the speaker will talk

about his own ideas and take meaningful questions to further elaborate on those ideas. The talk will discuss the historical context of the work and also the philosophical meaning behind each piece. SHAC will offer this program in collaboration with, the artist, the public, and, if possible, children at Frank Brattin Middle School. The exhibition will be shown mid-October through the month of November and the lecture will take place close to Veteran's Day.